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FRIENDLY DISPUTES ON ART & INDUSTRY

BETWEEN

WALTER CRANE
& LEWIS F. DAY

Caricatures by Walter Crane

LONDON: B. T. BATSFORD
94, HIGH HOLBORN. 1903

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THE IDEAL ARTIST.

L.F.D. "When an artist becomes vulgar and commercial he ceases to be an artist," you said. Do you stand by that?

W.C. Most certainly I do; because these characteristics appear to me to be quite antithetical to the artistic spirit.

L.F.D. I grant you that vulgarity vitiates art; but I can't see how we can fairly deny the title of art to a good deal which is certainly vulgar.

W.C. I cannot follow you, unless you make your meaning clear by some illustration.

L.F.D. The name of a comic artist occurs to me. I need not mention it. It will occur to you also. Do you mean to say he was not an artist?

W.C. We must distinguish between vulgarity of treatment and vulgarity of subject. An artist in characterisation may make refined studies of common objects. The objects *may* be vulgar, but his characterisation of them is not necessarily so. Charles Keene, for instance,

drew vulgar types with astonishing artistic precision, but you would not call him a vulgar artist.

L.F.D. Certainly not. You know very well I didn't mean Charles Keene. But vulgarity of subject *is* vulgarity, hardly to be redeemed by treatment.

W.C. My remark applied equally to the artist you had in your mind. You must admit that Charles Keene often gave us studies of vulgar types.

L.F.D. The difference between Charles Keene and—another comic artist, is that, in depicting vulgar types, he does not give you the idea that there is anything low in him. The other does.

W.C. The difference or distinction you draw between the two comic artists is a nice one. It may be so sometimes. Subject and treatment have to be considered as distinct.

L.F.D. Well, confining the question to treatment — what about the vulgarity of Versailles in all its gilded glory? I don't like Le Brun and the rest of them; but surely they were artists!

W.C. As to Versailles and Le Brun, I know little of either—they don't interest me—but it seems to me that gorgeousness and pomposity and conscious posing (which may be allied to vulgarity, but are hardly identical with it) were the inspiring motives. Style may redeem even pomposity and display.

L.F.D. Redeem it—yes! but it is vulgar all the same. And so we have the vulgarity of Louis XIV.—which is yet art.

W.C. You are answerable for Louis Quatorze in our discussion, and we did not rule out the past; but I was really thinking only of the present. The vulgarity of Louis XIV. decoration—if it is vulgarity—is almost refinement compared with some modern excesses; and is on so different a plane that it is hardly possible to compare it with modern work.

L.F.D. If pomposity and display are not vulgar, tell me what is vulgar in art.

W.C. I think nothing can exceed the vulgarity of what I call modern commercial pictorial art, and any form of so-called art which is consciously catch-penny.

L.F.D. I'm afraid most artists are looking out to catch pennies!

W.C. If that is the attitude of our artists, our arts must be in a queer state.

L.F.D. Were they ever anything else, think you? Doesn't an artist work to live? It is only when he thinks too much about money that it soils his artistic soul—if he has one. If I had dealings with an artist professing superiority to money considerations, I should rather expect him to get the better of me or to try to.

W.C. No; an artist *lives to work.* I am

afraid you are too deeply tinged with the commercialism of the present, and the mistrust it breeds, to get outside the money question ; but it really has nothing to do with art.

L.F.D. I don't see how the man is going to live to work unless he first works to live! Or is your artist endowed?

W.C. It is very much according to his endowments (his gifts by nature) whether an artist works to live, or lives to work. Practically, of course, he has to do both, but I think a genuine artist must always feel life too short for all he wants to do. We have got into a side issue.

L.F.D. Yes, that is not the point. I only took it up to show that "catchpenny" would not do as the test of vulgarity. Vulgarity, it seems to me, is often the want of that *chastening* which only experience gives a man, though he was an artist all the while.

W.C. We are brought up against our diversity of conception, for we never attempted a definition of vulgarity. It appears to me to arise from a certain insensibility and disregard of the feelings of others—is generally a selfish sort of blatancy, which mostly comes out in forms of commercialism and snobbishness nowadays. No doubt people can be chastened by experience to a certain extent, but none can change their nature.

L.F.D. Is there no snobbishness in the pose

of art affecting superiority to honest work avowedly done to earn a livelihood? In so far as artists pose (and they are prone to do it) they are guilty of vulgarity. And then there is the blatant artist! Commerce is not to me the bogey you would make it. It is vulgar or not, according to the ideal of commerce—often low enough, I admit, but not necessarily so.

W.C. I agree to all that: but I was not thinking of the attractive lady with a ship and caduceus. I think I said "commercialism," which has neither soul nor body.

L.F.D. Well, then, you give up the first part of your contention! Granting pose to be vulgar, and allowing that artists do sometimes pose, you admit the vulgar artist.

W.C. I don't at all; but we seem to be skirmishing over another part of the field. When I said, "If an artist becomes vulgar and commercial, he ceases to be an artist," I was thinking of the character of his work only, not his attitude as a man, or as a member of a profession. An artist may forget himself, but may also recover himself, of course, like any other man.

L.F.D. So was I thinking of the artist's *work*—which is vulgar when by its treatment it reveals the vulgar type of mind, of which greediness is only one out of many manifestations. Your interpretation of the word is too limited. Vulgarity in art, as I conceive

it, is only the lack of that natural refinement or acquired culture which lifts it above the common.

W.C. Your conception may be right; but vulgarity often has the aspect of a *positive* (and even aggressive) quality. What is common is not necessarily vulgar.

L.F.D. Yes. I admit it may be positive and even aggressive. I grant you, too, a distinction between common and vulgar. But didn't you once admit "a certain vulgar ability" in art?

W.C. Yes, but distinct from *artistic* ability.

L.F.D. Your ability in avoiding the corner is most artful. But we must find some definition of vulgarity, or some example of vulgar work which I call art and you do not. Suppose a man were to design a carpet in which cast shadows threw the ornament into strong relief. That I should call vulgar. But if the composition were perfect, the drawing masterly, the colour subtly harmonious, I would not deny he was an artist. Would you?

W.C. If such a combination of good and bad qualities ever occurred in a design, I could only say, like the humble curate in regard to his unfortunate egg at the Bishop's table, that "parts of it" were "excellent." The part (in your instanced carpet) that would make it vulgar for you would make it inartistic for me.

L.F.D. We must agree, then, to disagree; but I believe you are quite by yourself in identifying art with taste, essential though it be to the highest forms of art. Is not that all you really mean—though you have committed yourself to words which imply more?

W.C. Yes, it comes to that. I cannot separate taste from any form of art. Art without taste becomes craft *only*. Taste, to me, means that selective personal quality which is of the very essence of art.

L.F.D. I agree with you that taste is of the essence of *the art which appeals to me;* but I won't go so far as to say a man may not be deficient in it and yet be an artist. That seems as far as we can get in that direction.

Now as to "commercialism." I might agree with you on that score perhaps if I quite understood what you meant — though, by the way, "commercial" was the word you began on; the "*ism*" seems to make it more offensive.

W.C. What I mean by commercialism is simply that a man in his work thinks solely of profit-making. Commerce means the exchange of commodities, which, of course, is a rational and social proceeding, if they are not poisonous goods.

L.F.D. No artist thinks solely of profit-making. Most artists think of it more or less

—many of them more than is good for their art. The question is, whether an artist may not be—what shall I say?—*commercially competent.* I say he may.

W.C. I was endeavouring to make clear the difference or the distinction between commerce and commercialism. I do not think either has any *real* connection with art. An artist, of course, may be, and indeed *must* be, "commercially competent" in the sense of being able to meet industrial conditions in designing, to fix a value on his work; but "profit-making" is a separate business.

L.F.D. I don't see that. What is the difference between the profit an artist makes out of his invention and that which a manufacturer makes out of his foresight, knowledge, or initiative?

W.C. You have now switched our discussion straight on to economic lines. There is all the difference in the world between the profit of a manufacturer and the fee of an artist. The former runs a business with the object of making a profit. The latter is content to get a fair remuneration for his handiwork.

L.F.D. Both work for a profit; the manufacturer for a profit first, but also (let us hope) to produce a good thing; the artist (let us hope) first for the satisfaction of expressing himself, but also for a profit. In so far as an artist sells his work he is what you call commercial.

W.C. I do not agree with you at all. We know some exceptional manufacturers, but the typical modern manufacturer seems only to care to produce what the public, or that part of it he has access to, will buy. I don't blame him, he's forced to do it as a matter of business. It comes with him to only caring to produce for profit and to sell. The artist is in a totally different position. He does not produce for profit at all. He only asks a remuneration for his work. He only wants to live his life. The mere selling of his work does not make him commercial.

L.F.D. We have known artists superior to commercial considerations who ended in the bankruptcy court, and manufacturers who amassed money by disregarding every other consideration. Theoretically artists work for love of art only—practically they don't, even when they profess to ; and exceptions to this rule are almost as rare as manufacturers keenly interested in manufacture as such. Do you know any great number of artists who only want to lead the artistic life, regardless of money ? I don't.

W.C. I think most artists—worthy of the name—only want scope for their powers. But they are often narrowed and specialised by the commercial system. You do not seem to recognise the essential difference of their position, as compared with manufacturers, *economically considered.* Artists are not capitalists, but are really only a sort of

superior-wage-earners. It is quite possible they may live on the surplus values created by the manufacturer; but that does not alter their economic position of having to sell their labour or its results.

L.F.D. No, I don't see the essential difference between trading in commodities and in one's brains—or rather, I don't see how you can distinguish between the two. A manufacturer buys, let us say, cotton and turns it into cloth; another buys designs and prints them on the cloth; an artist buys paper and paint and makes the designs; and each sells what he buys at a profit. Probably the artist puts more brains into his work; but they are all traders more or less; it is a question of degree.

W.C. Surely you can see the difference between a man who actually produces a work of art out of raw material by the *force of his own hands and brains*, and one who produces something saleable out of raw material by means of the force of other people's hands, if not brains—to say nothing of machinery?

L.F.D. Of course there is all the difference between a man who does something, and one who gets others to do it for him, between the painter and the picture-dealer, for example; but between creating and trading there is the whole range of industry more or less artistic; and it is there that I find it difficult to dissociate art from commerce. If (as we both believe) in the best of handicraft there

is art; and if (as you cannot deny) handicraft is associated with commerce, how can it be that an artist ceases to be an artist when he touches commerce?

W.C. You are very ingenious, but I did not say when he "touches commerce," but when he becomes commercial—or commercialised, and I have already explained the sense in which I understand commercialism and its effects upon the artist.

L.F.D. No one disputes the extreme case in which the commercial is fatal to the artistic. You allow that art may touch commerce and not be utterly defiled. Is it any use attempting to determine how closely in touch with commerce art may be and yet save its soul alive? I think the two may be rather closely allied.

W.C. It is a *mariage de convenance* at best —and when commercialism peeps in at the door, art is apt to fly out of the window.

L.F.D. I never said it was a marriage made in Heaven, nor even a marriage. It *is* a matter of convenience—forced upon us perhaps by the times. That being so, why not try and work together?

W.C. Oh, it is hardly a case of *trying*. We *must*. We are all tied to the triumph car of commerce, and are, more or less, slaves of the financier and capitalist—the modern dictator.

L.F.D. Your outburst explains our difference. You hate commerce because you feel yourself tied to it. I can think kindly of it because I don't feel that it hurts me, or anybody, much—rightly conducted. But that is another question.

DESIGNER AND EXECUTANT.

L.F.D. The theory that every artist should carry out what he designs and every workman design what he does, will not hold water. To begin with, the thing is impossible.

W.C. Softly, friend. Are you not attacking an ideal, a principle of work at least, which by its influence has already produced excellent results in our Arts and Crafts? Do you not as an artist desire to see designs well adapted to their material and executed with feeling?

L.F.D. You don't answer my direct challenge directly. Of course I want design to be adapted to its material and executed with feeling; but neither one nor the other depends upon designer and executant being one. I am attacking the delusive idea propounded in the name of Arts and Crafts that, to ensure on the one part adaptation and on the other feeling, design and execution must be the work of one man.

W.C. When a man makes direct statements controverting a given position or opinion he must expect to be asked to support or prove them. The defender of the position attacked

may choose his own method, I presume. I therefore ask you why you say "delusive"?

L.F.D. Because it tends to mislead. Artists of imagination are not all patient workers, and able workmen are not all gifted with invention.

W.C. Do you think, then, that any workmanship is of any value, from the artistic point of view, without imagination or feeling?

L.F.D. It is because I want imagination and feeling *and something more*—craftsmanship (which I suppose you want too), and know that it is only by exception that I shall get all three from the same person, that I protest against the assertion that one man is to do everything.

W.C. I never made the assertion you protest against, but I presume you would admit that a designer is all the better for a first-hand acquaintance with the conditions, necessities and limitations of the work for which he is designing?

L.F.D. Certainly; but it doesn't follow in the least that he should execute his design with his own hand.

W.C. How then would a designer obtain his first-hand acquaintance with a method or material unless he had actually worked out his own design in that method or material?

L.F.D. He might often (not always) gain the necessary knowledge by seeing others do

the thing in the workshop. But I am not denying it is good for him (in some cases necessary) to do it himself and learn by actual experience what can be done. That is quite a different thing from doing all that he designs.

W.C. He would never be able to pay his rent and taxes if he did so, under present conditions! But I take it you concede the *principle* of the thing. Obviously if a designer does not realise the conditions of his design and the nature of the method and material by which it is to be carried out, he cannot, practically, design at all.

L.F.D. I began by saying it was impossible. You grant me that, when you allow that it would not enable a man to live. I do not concede that, even were it possible, it is desirable that design and execution should be the work always of one man. It is not merely your bogey, commercialism, which determines that one man should invent and another carry out—our faculties ordain it too.

W.C. Not so. Besides, I did not say a man could not *live* if he always carried out his own designs, only that "he could not pay his (present) rates and taxes." That is to say, he could not maintain the same standard of comfort or living as he could as a designer only, except perhaps in some special crafts such as bookbinding or jewellery or small decorative articles of luxury. There we are in economics, again!

L.F.D. For all practical purposes, "living" means paying your way—no less the duty of an artist than of other men; but that is not the point.

W.C. Seriously I do think that, without denying divergence of abilities, commercialism *has* been chiefly answerable for the separation of designer and craftsman. Our movement has been to re-unite them as far as possible —and, surely, so far all to the good.

L.F.D. I am not attacking the Arts and Crafts—"our" society, in so far as its aim is to bring together art and craftsmanship—but only the policy of those who go beyond that, and argue from the undue sub-division of labour that there should be no division of work according to capacity. I maintain that, in the first place, there *must* be—we can't help it—and, in the second, that we need not regret it.

W.C. Well, for my part, I consider what has really had most influence in our modern revival of design and handicraft, in giving freshness of treatment in all sorts of ways, and infusing new life into thoroughly commercialised crafts, has been this very principle of the combination of designer and craftsman in the same person. Many artists might be named who have "found" themselves in this way of working. I go further and say it is the ideal way of working.

L.F.D. Artists have of late, I admit, brought

freshness of design into crafts that had got deep into trade ruts; but the more important "who might be named" do *not* execute with their own hands all they design. To do that may be the "ideal" way of working—it is not (when it comes to the crafts) the practical one.

W.C. What would become of painting, for instance, if the execution were to be delegated to other hands than those of the man who conceived and designed the picture?

L.F.D. A painter's pride is in his painting; but a decorator or designer can, and may, entrust execution to assistants he has trained —must, indeed. Or would you waste the energy of a man of rare invention in doing what a workman of only ordinary qualifications can do quite well?

W.C. The ideal way of working in the crafts is no doubt on the workshop system —a designer working with assistants, whom he trains and inspires, and from whom are developed fresh designers from time to time, who learn every detail of the craft. Some crafts depend more upon individual expression than others. Every designer should be able to discover the craft in which he can find himself the most. I was thinking more of the *ultimate artistic expression* in any method of work, though I do not think a man of invention, even, wastes his time in elementary or subsidiary work; it strengthens his grasp, and keeps him in sympathy with every stage.

L.F.D. It is wasteful to set inventive brains to do work that wants only skilled hands —except in so far as it is well for a designer to do manual work *enough* to keep himself in touch with the workshop.

W.C. You cannot separate brains from hands really. It is a favourite industrial device (or pretence), but it has nothing to do with art. In all forms of art one's brains should be at the ends of the fingers, as well as in one's head. I fear you must have got touched with a little industrial imperialism.

L.F.D. Allowing assistants and executants at all, where would you stop? It must end in letting the men with fertile brains invent, and those with facile fingers execute.

W.C. With a true workshop system one would not "stop" at all. There would be a continuous living tradition in design and workmanship; and invention is wanted both in design and workmanship.

L.F.D. "Continuous living traditions" are just what are neglected by artists dabbling in crafts to which they have served no sort of apprenticeship.

W.C. I did not speak of *dabblers*, and I was upholding the old workshop system which includes apprenticeship.

L.F.D. The *relative* separation of brains and hands is neither a device of industrialism nor a pretence, but the work of nature.

W.C. The *actual* separation of brains and hands in modern manufacture, accompanied with the ideal of mechanical and "trade finish," has been the chief cause of the decline of art in industry. The revival has been owing to artists.

L.F.D. We are born with gifts of one kind or another. It is very rarely that a man is doubly gifted; and it is of no use arguing as if one great faculty did not practically imply some lack of capability in the opposite direction.

W.C. I cannot admit your last proposition. If a designer has no executive faculty, his designing faculty is of very little use and is practically latent, since a design is dumb unless it is expressed in *some* form or other —and even draughtsmanship is a craft.

L.F.D. The protest against "trade finish" goes too far when it is content with the *unfinish* of artists playing at craftsmanship. Your last remark falls flat. I said "*relative*" separation of brains and hands.

W.C. You misunderstand my remark; I was merely asserting the fact (in contradistinction to your *relative* separation) that the *actual* separation of brains and hands in modern industry had brought about the death of art. (That is flat, but I don't see it falls flat!)

Who do you mean is so content with amateur work while protesting against trade

finish? The charge is unfair. Morris was an emphatic protester: was his work unfinished? One of the most remarkable results of the movement has been the development of competent artist-craftsmen. Commerce is quick enough to imitate, anyway.

L.F.D. I don't mean Morris, of course—men of genius may do what they like—but artists (and they are not a few) who exhibit craftsmanship which gives the workman good reason to scoff. My contention is that in the "artist-craftsman" work, of which we hear so much, the craftsmanship is (naturally) very often less than competent.

W.C. I was not considering inefficient workmanship at all. You might condemn any movement by taking its lowest standards and results, perhaps. The fact remains that the Arts and Crafts movement has produced competent craftsmen in various crafts who are at the same time artists, and has also infused new life and feeling into the decorative arts generally. I do not understand why, if you are in sympathy with the aims and ideals of a movement, you should try to undervalue its work.

L.F.D. I am not trying to undervalue anything, but to rate things at their worth. Much of artist-craftsmanship, so called, *is* inefficient. And the delusion that there should be no sub-division of labour goes to account for its inefficiency.

W.C. One would think from your words, however, that you hated an artist-craftsman and all his works!

L.F.D. I have no prejudice against the artist-craftsman as such. I do resent his bounce; but I respect his modest effort, and admire his real accomplishment.

W.C. I am not aware of any faddist who goes so far as to say there should be *no* sub-division of labour. I have already put forward the workshop as the true system, where craftsmen and designers can learn every process and condition of a handicraft, and where also there is helpful co-operation and mutual assistance in carrying out a work, and where men may differentiate. Our technical schools now to some extent endeavour to fill the place of the old workshop in the handicrafts; but schools are apt to be theoretic at the best. Very few men like anything new, and trades are very conservative. But we have had to upset *bad trade traditions*. As to the scoffer, he generally makes a mock for jealousy. But, after all, the trade journals write much more sympathetically about the Arts and Crafts than the literary critics, who, of course, are eminent craftsmen (!) and know everything.

L.F.D. What have technical education, trade journals, and literary critics to do with it?

W.C. As our technical schools are educating students to execute their own designs

in various materials, and as at the outset you declared it *impossible* for a designer to be his own executant, I think this reference of mine *does* bear on the question.

L.F.D. Your point of view wants making clear. You admit the impossibility of a man's paying his way by executing his own designs, and you allow some sub-division of labour. And yet you take up my challenge. Where, precisely, is it that you join issue?

W.C. That an artist could not maintain his standard of life if he executed all his own designs, is merely an indictment against present economic conditions. Much depends upon the kind of craft, too. In some crafts it seems essential that designer and craftsman should be one: such as painting and modelling, calligraphy and illumination, bookbinding, jewellery, enamelling. Others, which involve multiple and perhaps heavy labour, may be co-operative, rightly. So far as artists have become craftsmen I think it has been all to the good.

L.F.D. I did not say it was impossible for a designer to be his own executant—in some crafts it is very possible. What I am combating is the theory that, where he is not, he ought to be.

W.C. Surely it entirely depends upon what sort of a designer he is?

L.F.D. That it all hangs upon the sort of design is just my contention.

W.C. We are agreed, then, that it depends upon the sort of design how far it is essential that design and execution should be in the same hands?

L.F.D. You grant me all I ask.

A DAY-SY CHAIN
(To unite Art & Industry)

THE ARTIST AND HIS LIVELIHOOD.

W.C. I have an idea that you are prepared to say a word for our present commercial system as not being so bad as I have maintained. To begin with, I think it is responsible both for the overcrowded market and for the competition among producers—both of which I look upon as serious evils.

L.F.D. So do I, though we might not agree as to whose fault it is entirely.

W.C. Well, again, the competitive struggle encourages insincere and catch-penny production in art, or at the best a narrow kind of specialism, into which even capable artists (painters, for instance) are forced, in order to live and support their families according to their standard of life, the business of getting a living being unfortunately mixed up with the work of the artist.

L.F.D. I dispute at all events your last words. It is no misfortune, but the saving of the artist, that he has to earn his living.

W.C. Everybody would be better in earning a living by useful work for the community. It is not the earning a living I object to, but the tendency under the present conditions to

force the artist to produce work primarily with the object of selling—a thing which has no necessary connection with art at all. It is rarely that which sells which is nearest to the artist's heart; and therefore it is difficult to be at once commercial and sincere in art. Thus the deleterious process begins.

L.F.D. Difficult it may be. But the artist shirks the difficulty, and so the "deleterious process" goes on.

W.C. I cannot quite see the bearing of your retort. I do not think artists shirk difficulties more than other men. They are certainly constantly seeking them in their work.

L.F.D. You retire somewhat from your position. That an artist does not work *only* or even primarily with a view to profit is just what distinguishes him from a tradesman. My complaint is that he is given to think the world of less account than his temperament, to separate himself from the "community."

W.C. I do not see what ground I have given. My position is that the present conditions tend to commercialise artists in working for their living. The artist, *qua* artist, does not work at all for profit. He produces for the joy of producing and the pleasure of giving pleasure. Artists are of very different temperaments, though *the* artistic temperament is very often written of as if it were invariable.

L.F.D. Art does not gain by the artist's setting up a standard of life all to himself.

W.C. I think a man's art distinctly gains by his cherishing his own ideal; and, so far as he succeeds in attaining it, the community gains also. An artist's "standard of life," however, is generally what the community allows him.

L.F.D. The difficulty I accuse the artist of shunning is that of reconciling sincerity in art with the duty of citizenship. As an artist he may not work for profit. As a man he has to support himself—and I doubt if in the end his art gains by his cherishing an ideal which does not include that obvious duty.

W.C. It is quite possible for an artist to be a good citizen, and do the work that comes in his way as well as he knows how, without ever having an opportunity of carrying out his highest ideals in art. As a citizen an artist must also be a responsible person; and the more character he possesses the more interesting will his work be.

L.F.D. Do you mean to say we are to take the artist at his own valuation?

W.C. I do not expect the community instantly to recognise inspired geniuses and to insist upon paying for their board and lodging; but in a true society we should desire to enable everyone to do the work he could do best, and not allow the best part of an artist's time and energy to be consumed in a handicapped struggle for a living by doing less than the best that is in him. As to an artist's own valuation of himself it is *sometimes*

correct. It is said the world always takes us at our own valuation (and we can call the artist's handiwork in evidence).

L.F.D. I am inclined to think that an artist is happiest when he is not concerning himself about ideals, but just doing the work that falls to his lot—doing it, of course, with all his heart. That seems to me the sane ideal. If a man acts up to it, the work he is fit for will come to him—though it may very likely not be his ideal. I do not know about "handicapping"; but hindrances help. It would not often, I fancy, prove a profitable investment to buy an artist at his own valuation and to sell him, I will not say at ours (which might be quite as wide of the mark) but at his real worth.

W.C. "Profitable investments" are quite outside the domain of art; really such commercial considerations have a baneful influence upon art and artists as well as the public in our time. The artist who is a specialist, or specialises himself, strictly with a view to commercial success, loses in time his power of even doing the one thing for which he has specialised well —"with all his heart," that is, in your sense.

L.F.D. I don't dispute that.

W.C. The ideal of good workmanship is an admirable ideal, and it is better to do a small thing well than a big thing badly; but a man who designs wall-papers might do more interesting work in mural painting possibly. I knew a clever student who had to design "bobbin tickets" for a living, though he had

a feeling for stained glass. It is an age of round men in square holes. The man perhaps get squarer in course of time, and the hole perhaps gets worn rounder; but the result is usually a compromise; and compromises, however useful in life, are not favourable to art of strong character.

L.F.D. You misapprehend my meaning. It was not merely good workmanship I advocated, but doing the work to be done—designing bobbin tickets, it may be, instead of stained glass; accepting, in fact, plain duties. I doubt if art gains by a man's shirking them. My point is that artists take themselves too seriously.

W.C. You seem to be satisfied that all the work people do, congenial or otherwise, is *wanted* (or that artists and others can *get* work if they want it). It seems to me, under the present speculative commercial system of guess-work, workers—artists or otherwise—are often in the position of "making things that nobody wants, to sell to people who have no use for them."

L.F.D. Only persons of exceptional strength and purpose have any right to expect to work under exceptional conditions. I grant there is no real want for much that is produced to the order of commerce—nor yet for much that is done on the impulse of art.

W.C. I think every human being has a right to congenial work, and not only artists. Whether we expect square or round holes,

the holes are *there*, and lots waiting and eager to rush in whenever one falls vacant. Original minds and characters of unusual strength of purpose occasionally discover apertures for themselves, or make them; but there is not much choice for the mass. Their work, like their clothes, is cut out and ready made. You seem to think it is the best of all possible worlds. I confess I do not; but all the same I would make the best of circumstances, and not "pine."

L.F.D. Not the best of all possible worlds, perhaps, but not so black as pessimists paint it.

W.C. You must not number me with the pessimists; and I do not ask for exceptional conditions — only fair conditions. Supply creates demand sometimes. On the other hand, an artist has to make his living. Say he designs patterns. They meet all the working conditions. The manufacturers like them, the trade admires them as patterns; but they don't sell sufficiently fast. The manufacturer returns to the artist and shows him something vulgar that does sell, and wants him to do something like it—in other words, to give the lie to himself. Do such conditions as these improve an artist? They are common in the pressure of getting a living.

L.F.D. Perhaps what you call "fair" conditions I should call exceptional? Anyway, the conditions you describe act upon the artist according to the metal he is made of.

W.C. You seem to evade my point. The question is, are such conditions, taking their general effect, favourable or unfavourable to the production of artistic work—to say nothing of an artist's best? For one who triumphs over degrading conditions how many are forced to knuckle under?

L.F.D. Opposition to degrading conditions braces the artist. Why assume that he is of such poor stuff he needs must yield?

W.C. I did not assume anything. I am arguing against your position that, under present conditions, being forced to make a living by his art improves the quality of both the artist and his art. I gave you a sample of ordinary conditions under commercialism. You say it's "bracing." Do you mean bracing to the man or to his art? I see nothing bracing in being asked to do vulgar commercial work, when a man has proved he can do better. Nor do I think it "bracing" not to succeed in making both ends meet by refusing to prostitute one's art to the demands of trade—or, shall we say, a tasteless public?

L.F.D. I doubt if ever things were so favourable to art as we may fancy. Distance idealises.

W.C. I was not thinking of the past. I look to the *future* for juster social conditions and fairer conditions generally. They could hardly be more unhealthy for artists than they are now.

L.F.D. The conditions under which we work are, of course, anything but ideally perfect; still, the tussle with them is good for an artist, and even for his art. The best work has been done by men who fought their way through them. You do seem to me to assume that an artist must either yield to demands degrading to his art or fail to earn a decent living. I deny that.

W.C. You seem to me to mix up two distinct things. The practice of an art is full of difficulties. These are quite enough for the artist and of course the struggle with them strengthens him as an artist; but the sordid struggle for a living, in which he has to snatch the bread from his brother artists, does not improve him as an artist, nor as a man, it seems to me. "Emulation" is a very different thing from competition. It is impossible to live in a vitiated atmosphere without some deterioration. We have only to look around us to see the effect of present conditions upon artists, even if we do not see the effect upon ourselves.

L.F.D. Past or future, ideal conditions of work are something of a fairy tale. I am no lover of competition, no blind admirer of the present. But the "sordidness" of our actual conditions is greatly the fault of us living men; and artists are in part responsible for it. If the air is vitiated, it is we who foul it.

W.C. Fairy tales as well as ideals have their practical value, my friend (besides being singularly true in a symbolic and typical

sense). Granted we are all in a measure responsible for the present conditions, or rather, *for their continuance!* But we did not make them, and some of us are in a perpetual condition of protest against them, and would change them if we could. "A forty-thousandth part" of a member of Parliament doesn't effect much for the ordinary citizen, even if he can claim so much!

L.F.D. You are trailing socialism across the path of our discussion. I maintain that the necessity of earning our living is no misfortune, but a good thing for us.

W.C. You have no right to say I am "trailing socialism across our discussion," as if it were a red herring! I have, in illustration of my arguments, described present conditions, which are the very antithesis of socialism. It is impossible to argue about earning a living without reference to economic conditions. It is not argument simply to squat upon your original assertion. You advance no reasons for your opinion!

L.F.D. Advance no reasons! Don't I, though? If I "squat" upon my original assertion it is only to show you where I am. Here is again a reason for it. The fight with circumstances seems to me just what the artist *wants* to make a man of him, and not a mere emotionalist.

W.C. I envy you your belief in circumstances. It seems to me that circumstances

may make almost anything of a man—and perhaps something much less; but circumstances, or as you say, "the fight" with them, will not make a man unless the elements of manhood are there already in sufficient force. Art, after all, is a manifestation of character, and art which has no character behind it cannot be worth much; but it is just the mediocre art which a commercial age encourages—since it is produced to sell, and is not the genuine, spontaneous expression of a mind and character. Circumstances which make a man dependent for his living on the caprice of others, or on the condition of his work being profitable to others, cannot have a favourable effect upon character in the long run.

L.F.D. On the contrary, the circumstance of having to *control oneself*, and even the necessity of doing work not in itself attractive, make for character: mere yielding to impulse weakens it.

W.C. I never disputed the necessity of self-control or of directing impulse; only I think a man and an artist should be master of himself, not the slave of commerce or fashion—the mask of commerce.

L.F.D. Why put all the blame on commerce? If men are the slaves of commerce or of fashion, isn't that very much because they are slaves by nature? Has your artist neither the strength to resist nor the wit to get out of the way of fashion?

W.C. You do not even yet seem to grasp the fact that there is such a thing as an economic system (not economical) which *forces* people into certain grooves. I maintain that an artist —say, a designer—having his living to get, must either be prepared to meet the demands of trade, the caprice of fashion—whatever you like to call it—or starve: unless he happens to have other resources; but I am not speaking of the exceptional person. I have already given you a typical case.

L.F.D. I deny that a designer must degrade his art or starve. He must in a sense "meet the demands of trade"; but he may do it in a way that is by no means degrading—in a way which makes a better man of him, and no worse artist. The alternative is not, as you seem to think, between doing entirely as he likes and just as a vulgar employer may dictate.

W.C. What I said was "a designer must be prepared to meet the demands of trade or starve." If you think it makes a better man (or artist) of him to sacrifice his individual ideas (which alone give a character and point to his work) for what is more or less of a compromise — well! you have a right to your opinion. Your alternative, by the way, was not mine. But *what is* degradation, if you please? You seem to admit necessity under certain circumstances of working on a lower plane, a lower grade — *degradation!* Can any thoughtful person doubt, looking at

the whole field of modern commercial production, that quantity, not quality, is the aim?

L.F.D. I do not in the least admit the necessity of working on a lower plane. It comes, as you say, to what is degradation. It is not necessarily degrading to do what is asked of you, nor yet necessarily a fine thing to do as you like. I don't see why an artist should expect to be free of even strict conditions, and I don't see that compliance with them (such as I hold needful) is either a hardship or hurts him as an artist.

W.C. It strikes me we are looking at the matter from very different points of view. Let me say again that I do not at all object to strict conditions — an artist *must* work under conditions of some sort, of course, conditions of service, use, material, purpose— these all give character to the forms of art; but when an artist has met these conditions, when his work is good and tasteful and individual, he will be asked in these days to do something to please the world market, which is a vulgar market. I think a man who has spent his life in cultivating his taste and skill in design knows what he ought to do and what is fitting better than a salesman. His efforts to meet the salesman must deteriorate him as an artist. You seem to be haunted with the vision of some fantastic disembodied bogey artist who "don't know where 'e are."

L.F.D. Many an artist doesn't! *One* of

the conditions is to meet wants. If a man wants his portrait painted, it is of no use offering him a landscape; if he wants florid ornament, it is no use offering him severe; and *vice versâ*.

W.C. Quite so—such wants are, of course, perfectly reasonable, and any artist ought to be prepared to meet them; but these are quite different conditions to what I was thinking of.

L.F.D. I am not saying the world is not vulgar; but there is room for all, and work for all. If artists yield readily to the demand for vulgarity, it is that there is a touch of it in themselves.

W.C. The world has become vulgarised by the gambler (financial and commercial). There ought to be room and work for all, and there would be on any rational and humane economic system. At present we have the unemployed (artists and others) as a direct result of our system.

L.F.D. We are agreed, at all events, that the artist must meet conditions. I will admit it may be harder than perhaps once it was for him to keep his artistic soul alive; but, for all that, it is no greater hardship for him than for the rest of the world, to have to earn his living.

W.C. The very embodiment of art is in meeting conditions successfully; but technical conditions, my friend, are one kind, and

economic conditions another. The first are all right. The second may be, as in my opinion they now are, *desperately bad for art and artists.* I have already said it would be better for all to earn their living—many don't at present. I did not say artists yielded to the demand for vulgarity readily; I do not think a real artist ever can; but he gets reduced to various shifts, and that deteriorates him.

L.F.D. You speak of the "vulgarity of the world" as if the artist were outside it.

W.C. Of course, from the outset, in using the word "artist" I have meant the genuine article. I can't argue about the shams or charlatans.

L.F.D. Occasionally it is the employer who keeps the artist within the bounds of taste.

W.C. What wonderful employers you must know!

L.F.D. And what of the vulgarity of the artists who edge themselves into social notoriety?

W.C. From my point of view, when an artist becomes vulgar and commercial he ceases to be an artist. One may be "in the world" but "not of it," you know.

L.F.D. We differ as to the use of the word artist. The artist I am arguing about is the artist (or, if you like, the worker in art), *as he is*, not the *ideal* artist. Your "genuine" artist

can be compared only with his equivalent, the genuine employer. And then where are you?

W.C. No; I was not talking of the "ideal artist." I was speaking of artist and employer as we find them under present conditions. "Stripped of all vesture that beguiles," they are in the relative positions of worker and exploiter. I am afraid there is no escape from that conclusion—charm you never so wisely.

L.F.D. The artist is sometimes not much of a "worker"! (Or is industry another of the virtues without which a man is no artist?) And the employer is sometimes not an "exploiter," if by that you imply that his one desire is to grind profit out of others. Where would the Wellington Monument have been if Collmann had not "employed" Alfred Stevens?

W.C. I was not considering the variations of the sense of moral responsibility in either artist or employer. My remark applied solely to their economic position. Whether an artist is industrious or not (some are slow, some are quicker workers—their temperaments vary as much as their work) or whether an employer desires to exploit or not, does not affect this aspect of the question. A man must either live by his own work or by the work which other people do for him; he must under present conditions, in the long run either exploit or be exploited.

L.F.D. We don't seem to be getting further

with the alleged hardship of an artist having to earn his own living. That was the point which I disputed. You began by saying that "the business of getting a living was unfortunately mixed up with the work of an artist." Now that you admit it is better for all to earn their living, our dispute comes to an end.

W.C. I think I said at the outset I thought it better for all to earn their living—that is to say, for each to serve the community according to his or her capacity. But he who lives to please must please to live; and here's where the unfortunate part of it comes in under present (economic) conditions as regards the artist—hence insincerity, banality, and pot-boilers.

ART AND INDUSTRY.

L.F.D. You are against division of labour, are you not? I think the principle of *one work one man* may (like the division of labour) be carried too far—and is. One result of this is to widen the breach between art and industry.

W.C. The principle is not carried very far yet, so far as I know. How a principle which actually unites art and industry can widen the breach between them I am unable to understand.

L.F.D. The present alliance of Arts and Crafts is offensive as well as defensive. It constitutes an attack upon industry; does it not?

W.C. Most certainly the Arts and Crafts movement is an attack upon a commercial or capitalistic organisation of industry. It is both offensive and defensive, as you say.

L.F.D. Industry may have gone astray; but yours is not the way to bring it back to the path of art! You don't suppose a handful of independent "art-workers" will upset it?

W.C. A handful of independent workers (inspired largely by a new social ideal) have

at least set up a new standard, have created a new class of artist-craftsmen and a more or less sympathetic public. No one supposed they could suddenly transform the factory system and machine-production for profit into *artistic production for use* in the great world; but it is remarkable how quick commercial industry has been to imitate some of the aforesaid artist-craftsmen — how largely, in fact, it lives upon their ideas.

L.F.D. You speak for yourself when you say the Arts and Crafts movement is socialistic. Some of us who have worked for it have no belief in reversing the current of industrial progress.

W.C. What may you mean by "reversing the current of industrial progress"?

L.F.D. I mean, for example, going back to hand-labour and production on a scale which makes it prohibitively costly.

W.C. Is it not rather a curious comment on so-called "industrial progress" that to obtain a really artistic thing, however simple, it is necessary to return to hand-work?

L.F.D. The theory that for artistic industry we must go back to hand-work entirely, is founded upon the assumption that only hand-work is artistic—which I do not grant. You claim too much for the movement when you ascribe to the "Arts and Crafts" all that the better kind of producers "for profit" are doing, or have done, in the way of art.

W.C. Who are "the better kind of producers for profit" who are also leaders in art?

L.F.D. You can hardly deny that producers are doing something for art (I said nothing about "leading" it) when they induce artists like yourself to design for them!

W.C. So far as my work is concerned they nearly all complain that they can't sell it.

L.F.D. It is not wholly to the discredit of manufacturers if they give the public a chance of buying what won't sell. But your experience is not mine.

W.C. My statement as to the character and work of the Arts and Crafts movement is entirely accurate. I not only speak for myself, but, as you must be well aware, for others also, who have been leading influences in it. There are different shades of opinion, of course, amongst us, and some, like yourself, are individualistic; but I think there cannot be any doubt as to the main bias.

L.F.D. You speak for yourself and others, no doubt, but not for the movement as I understand it—or I should not be of it.

W.C. I am afraid, then, that you do not fully understand the movement. The few manufacturers who seek outside artists to design for them, mostly do so for purposes outside their regular trade; and it hardly affects the main current of supply.

L.F.D. Naturally outside artists are employed on work outside the course of regular trade: they won't (or can't?) conform to its conditions!

W.C. You must be aware that the design directors of manufacturing firms have been mostly "outside artists" who have been induced to go inside. The big organisations exist for doing trade and making a profit, primarily; but there are manufacturers who have experimented in outside artists—as they are forced to do when they want freshness. I don't blame the manufacturers for dropping the outside artist if they find his work beyond their public—because they run their business to pay; but it is *not* the fault of the artist. He is quite prepared to meet mechanical conditions of reproduction, but cannot consent to vulgarise his taste.

L.F.D. Is he prepared to take machinery into account?

W.C. Machines were only invented in the interests of trade. A machine may be a monument of invention, but it cannot *invent*, only imitate or reproduce something artistic, the artistic part of which owes its character to the conception and taste of the artist. The artistic supremacy of hand-work is even acknowledged by the machine—since we have "machine-made hand-made" goods now!

L.F.D. Who in this world ever said that a machine was good for anything more than reproduction? The whole contention is that

in artistic hands it may be the means of artistic reproduction. For my own part I find artists, especially "outside" artists (the phrase is yours, not mine), more commonly afraid of vulgarising their taste than prepared to meet mechanical conditions.

W.C. Mechanical reproduction of artistic work, however controlled, must still be mechanical, and therefore necessarily inferior to original hand-work. As to the type of artist who seems to haunt your imagination, I don't come across him. I am arguing from personal experience.

L.F.D. And I from mine. I do. What if reproduction (even *not* mechanical) is inferior to original work? Reproduction there must be. Hand-work (even were it always adequate) is often out of the question. Mechanical reproduction can be bad enough, but I have known it good enough to deceive an artist! It might generally be good enough, for all the use I would make of it, if artists generally would help.

W.C. "If artists generally would help"? No, you mean artists particularly, or rather, *particularly qualified artists*. There are lots of so-called "starving" painters; but though perfectly willing to earn a living by some form of art, they have not the necessary technical knowledge generally to make their way in "industrial" design, even if they had the feeling for it—and supposing they had both, they would be still liable to be "chucked"

by the trade. Many can make pictures more or less presentable, but few can produce workable designs.

L.F.D. Granted the few who can design, and the special aptitude necessary to do it, your "starving" painter might possibly still have earned his bread at industrial design—if only he had begun at the beginning and *learnt his trade.* Without that it is no use being "willing."

W.C. Exactly so—only you seemed to imply that artists are too stiff and proud to learn!

L.F.D. I think that some, at least, of the unsuccessful fail because they expect the world to shape itself to them. It won't. Why should it?

W.C. "You cannot kick the world too hard," it has been said—probably by the *shapers.* The world is apparently a football to some; but the rules of the game are unfair; they handicap the many and give enormous advantages to the few. The immense majority of workers, or would-be workers, are only too anxious to shape themselves to the world. I wish there were more of the other sort; then there would be a better chance of altering the rules of the game.

L.F.D. The rules of the game are none of my making!

W.C. How about those who have carefully shaped themselves to a certain pattern or sort

of art, and find themselves suddenly thrown aside as out of fashion?

L.F.D. If a man sets himself to exploit a fashion he has small claim to pity when it fails him. I would have him train himself to meet fair conditions, not go with the stream, but learn to swim. He would not then be left high and dry by the tide. Mankind in general may be only too ready to conform to conditions: artists are more inclined to resent them, I think. They take themselves too seriously.

W.C. You don't take my meaning. It is the artist who is exploited. He is commercially forced into a certain groove, and becomes specialised, instead of being free to develop in the way you suggest. However able, he may still be left high and dry under present conditions.

L.F.D. Your artist doesn't seem to have much *grit* in him.

W.C. *Grist* before grit. I am speaking of the economic position of artists generally, and not painting a portrait.

L.F.D. Artists generally are too much disposed to think the world ought to treat them with special consideration.

W.C. No, they only want *fair* conditions—at least, that is all I am asking for. And no one kind of worker gets such under our present system.

L.F.D. I think they expect more than fair

conditions, and that you go too far in your accusation against our present system. It is only a makeshift, I dare say; but a good and willing workman gets terms he can accept without prejudice to his artistic faculty—if any.

W.C. Yes, so long as his work can be made a source of profit, or remains a more or less valuable "commercial asset" of some kind.

L.F.D. Well! Isn't that the only ground on which he has any claim to ask payment?

W.C. According to the man in possession—yes: but do you contemplate with satisfaction a system which makes the market, or rather the dealer, the arbiter in matters of art, not to speak of life?

L.F.D. I have not much to say against a system of give and take, according to which society expects men, artists or whoever they may be, to do what it wants in return for what they want.

W.C. I envy you your cheerful optimism and your high opinion of the working of the present social and economic machine! To me it seems rather a system of "take" than of give, as at present constituted, and, as in Wonderland, "no one gets what they like, or likes what they get." You ought to have been a bishop!

L.F.D. I'm afraid you are not much of a judge of bishops. No. I'm a rebel like

yourself, only not so firmly persuaded that whatever is is wrong.

W.C. I dare say you would make the Bench "sit up"! But you must not number me with the pessimists. My position is more that of the man who said, "The good Lord sent nice things to eat into the world, and the devil sent the cooks to spoil them." It is not the things in themselves, it's the cooks.

L.F.D. I am glad your pessimism goes no further, and that it is only the cooks who are to blame. But are you sure that you and I don't belong to their number?

W.C. No doubt I do; but artistic cookery (or design) is a subject upon which there are many opinions. You and I have our own convictions as to right and appropriate treatment of materials; but we can't expect to please everybody. The difficulty is to please oneself.

L.F.D. You seem to think an artist has only to please himself—which, to my thinking, would not entitle him to his hire. I should promptly discharge that cook. But that is not the point. I maintain that the dinner does not suffer when the *chef* designs and overlooks, the cook cooks, and kitchenmaids work under her.

W.C. I say an artist *must* please himself—that is, satisfy himself about his work; or how is he to satisfy anybody else? Discharge your conscientious cook who tasted his or her

work before serving it, would you? It is the cooks (or artists) without *taste* who do the mischief. But don't push my analogy too far, or I shall repudiate it! A manufactory is not my ideal exactly.

L.F.D. Nor mine. Your "manufacture" is not quite the same thing as my "industry"; but, prosaic as they both may be, we cannot do without them, and you do only harm by separating them from art.

W.C. You remember Ruskin, "Industry without art is brutality." I believe it; so you must not accuse *me* of separating them. I want to unite them. But, indeed, it seems to me no kind of human labour can be altogether without art of some sort. The æsthetic sense may come in in the sweeping of a floor even.

L.F.D. Still more, then, in manufacture. I know you don't mean to separate art and industry; but I think your attitude towards manufacture and all its ways has that effect.

W.C. To oppose what I consider detrimental to art in industry can hardly injure the artistic part of industry. We speak of industry and trade as if they were absolutely good things in themselves, whereas either or both may be quite evil in their effects and results.

L.F.D. You don't mean to say that you can't do harm without meaning it? I'm afraid the best of intentions will not always

prevent that. And I maintain that by adopting the irreconcilable attitude you put art (as far as in you lies) out of the question in industry.

W.C. I don't allow that one does harm by endeavouring to be honest and true to one's principles or ideals, however short one may fall of them in practice. An accurate diagnosis of a disease is surely a necessary preliminary to any cure?

L.F.D. I'm not objecting to diagnosis, but to rash use of the knife—which, with the very best of intentions on the part of the surgeon, may kill instead of curing. In your case it seems to me very much like cutting industry adrift from art.

W.C. You think I am cutting industry adrift from art, when I believe myself to be only clearing away a little fog! It all depends on the industry and the way it is conducted, as to its unity with art. There is all the difference in the world between an artist (or artistic manufacturer, if you like) working with assistants, and a capitalist, not personally interested in the product, running an industry purely for profit.

L.F.D. There is no question of industry purely for profit.

W.C. You surely must be aware that modern industry is production for *profit* as distinct from production for *use?*

L.F.D. Profit is no modern invention. It

entered into the calculations of producers at a very early period of the world's history.

W.C. Capitalistic production in which people can be merely pecuniarily interested *is* a modern development.

L.F.D. We only push it to extremes. You have no right to assume there are no manufacturers who desire to do artistically.

W.C. I expressly excepted artistically-minded manufacturers; but even these, however desirous they may be to produce artistic things, have to give in to trade demands. I know several cases in which artistic attempts by manufacturers had to be dropped because they did not pay.

L.F.D. When artists tell the manufacturer that his only hope of art is in the execution of a thing by one man throughout from design to finish, it is very much like telling him he may go sink or swim for all they care, or all the help they'll give him.

W.C. I never took that line with manufacturers, and don't know of any artist who did—or does.

L.F.D. You know no artist who takes the line of leaving manufacture to itself! I think we both know some whose practice it seems to be, if not their policy.

W.C. You are mistaken. It is the manufacturers (saving a few that belong to us) who leave us artists severely alone.

L.F.D. There is no quarrel to which there are not two parties. But do you mean to say that there is not among artist-craftsmen and their allies a prejudice against manufacture which leads them, not merely to leave it to its devices, but to lavish their best abuse upon it?

W.C. Artists judge manufacture according to its ways and works. There is no prejudice that I know of. On the contrary, artists are quite willing to co-operate with manufacturers who desire to produce artistic things. We all know what we mean by the expression "tradey." You will allow there are many products of modern commercial manufacture which earn this distinction?

L.F.D. Your artists are all swans. I find a fair proportion of geese among mine.

W.C. Don't worry about geese or swans. I have no retainer for geese, but am only endeavouring to present the genuine artistic point of view as distinct from the trade view.

L.F.D. I never denied the general tradiness of trade work. What I am combating is the assumption that it must be so, and that the "outside artist" is going henceforth to make the running "off his own bat." I think not. He would do more useful work as one of a team which included the much-abused manufacturer.

W.C. You, as an artist, I should have thought, would acknowledge that the artistic

influence on manufacture is all to the good so far as it is genuine, whether it is the effect of protest, independent effort, or co-operation.

L.F.D. Methinks the artist doth protest too much.

W.C. And thou?

L.F.D. I do not, "as an artist," protest artistic superiority to profit.

WORK AND PLEASURE.

L.F.D. Labour is a good thing—and regular labour—and not always the labour that a man likes doing.

W.C. I can't accept your proposition without considerable qualifications. To begin with: Labour may be devoted, and often is, to a bad end. Industry is not necessarily a virtue. Then, again, I do not believe that any man can do good work unless he takes a keen interest in it.

L.F.D. Industry is at any rate more of a virtue than idleness; and self-indulgence soon becomes a vice. Good work, I quite agree, implies keen interest in it, but a worker *gets interested in his work.*

W.C. There must be a touch of the Puritan about you!

L.F.D. Have you only just discovered that taint in me?

W.C. I think there is a lot of vicious industry going on, and that the world at its present stage suffers more from this than from idleness. Close times are highly necessary.

L.F.D. I don't grant you that industry is vicious. What the world suffers from is misdirection of energy.

W.C. Excess of anything is usually vicious, or becomes so by abuse. At present, things are made that the world would be better without, and often by poisonous processes. Is this misdirection? To be interested in one's work is only another term for taking *pleasure* in it.

L.F.D. You are confounding the work a man likes to do and the work he gets to like in doing it. I maintain it is good to have to do a fair share of work which one's temperament would incline one to shirk.

W.C. I am not confounding anything. If a man gets to like his work he must take some pleasure in it. If the work is worth anything he *must* take pleasure in it. Don't be shocked.

L.F.D. Why should I be shocked?

W.C. I was poking fun, because your puritanical strain makes you think it's so good for us to do what we don't like, and therefore to take pleasure in one's work must be little short of sinful!

L.F.D. Puritan if you like, not puritanical. If a man who gets to like his work may be said to take pleasure in it, why waste compassion on the artist condemned to work in which no pleasure is possible?

W.C. I am not aware that I am wasting any "compassion," except on those who cling to such ideas—I mean puritanical ideas.

L.F.D. Well, then, let us return to your

"vicious industry." If a man spends his energy in making useless things by "poisonous processes," his energy *is* misdirected.

W.C. It seems to me obvious a man must take pleasure in his work to do any good. The kind of industry you call misdirected is equally correctly described in my terms as *vicious*.

L.F.D. I don't defend the misdirection of industry which you call vicious industry, and the puritan instinct to which I confess does not at all incline me to see sin in pleasure. All I maintain is that pleasure is not *all*—either in life or in art—and the artist's pretension to be exempt from all but pleasure is preposterous.

W.C. A demand for congenial work—not only for artists but for humanity generally—is a very different thing to a "pretension to be exempt from all but pleasure."

L.F.D. Well, who is to do the uncongenial work in your Utopia?

W.C. What would be uncongenial to some natures would not be to others. "From each according to his capacity, to each according to his needs" is the true principle. Your question assumes that everybody has the same capacities, interests, and tastes. This is far from the real state of the case.

L.F.D. I assume nothing of the kind; but that, when each man has done what pleases him, there will be a considerable residuum of

work no man would do for the joy of doing it. He has to do his share of that—not shirk it.

W.C. No work that I know of is all joy. It is a struggle to unite material with ideas —or to make material obey or express ideas whether of order, cleanliness, convenience, or beauty. No sensible person ignores the useful, necessary work of a community; but we shove it on to the shoulders of a class. Toil is excessive on one hand, and there's nothing to do on the other. The just organisation of labour is *the* social problem.

L.F.D. The point which I am arguing is not the social problem, but (in the first place) the claim of the artist to shove "the work he doesn't like on to other shoulders," and (in the second) the advantage of his doing so, whether to the artist himself or to his work. Or is he "not as other men"?

W.C. You cannot discuss the position of any worker without touching the social problem. But who are these unconscionable "artists" that sit so heavily on your soul? What work do they "shove" on to others?

L.F.D. Who? Why, the artists for whom you claim that they should not be asked to do what they don't like, poor dears! I say they try to "shove" on to others (the word is yours) their share of the uncongenial work that has got to be done.

W.C. Do not twist my words and meaning, but try and give me a more definite answer.

I don't object to the word "shove"—I only want to know *what sort of work* is thus shoved by artists on to others?

L.F.D. What they don't like! I am not conscious of having twisted your words or meaning. I understand you to claim for the artist that he is to do only the work which gives him pleasure.

W.C. I said "congenial work." This might involve hard, difficult, or even painful stages. But you are still vague.

L.F.D. It is not I who am vague.

W.C. You neither name the *kind* of artist nor the kind of work. Artists who deserve the name take enormous pains, and don't "shirk" any trouble to perfect their work, as far as my experience goes.

L.F.D. I say there is work to be done which is not a joy to anyone, and that the artist has got to do his share of it, or he is shirking it.

W.C. You cannot be speaking of artists—you must have in your mind commercialists who employ "ghosts"?

L.F.D. The artists I have in mind are the very reverse of commercial. They may or may not work hard. My point is, they will only work at what they like. Have you never known an artist who will not do the work offered him, though he is in arrears with whoever will trust him? I have. And I don't pity him.

W.C. No. I can't say I know the species.

L.F.D. You are fortunate in never having come across a "common object" of the studio.

W.C. A *commoner object* in our time seems to me to be men seeking work they *can* do, and who possess excellent qualities which somehow stand in the way of their getting a living.

L.F.D. A man flatters himself that his "excellent qualities" stand in the way of his getting a living. It is his cussedness.

W.C. You must put down "cussedness"—whatever that may be—to temperament also, I fear. But are you quite sure you are not confusing *won't* with *can't*, in such cases? Some artists are so specialised that they *can* only do one sort of work, and they are knocked out when that fails them.

L.F.D. Some arrive at that condition by never having taken themselves in hand and made themselves do the thing before them. If they are born so (perhaps it is *they* who confuse can't and won't), they are to be pitied, like other incomplete unfortunates.

W.C. Why so bitter? since people *can't* change their temperaments.

L.F.D. I expect even an artist to be a man.

W.C. You expect an artist to be "a man." Are you sure you are not asking him to be a "maid-of-all-work"? (This is no reflection on the maid-of-all-work whom necessity and the economic system compels.)

L.F.D. No, not maid-of-all-work, but master of himself. He *can* control his temperament —only a tendency, after all.

W.C. I did not say temperament could not be *controlled*, but that it could not be *changed*. I think it a tougher thing than you do. It is *the* difference between one artist and another.

L.F.D. The difference between one artist and another is the personality of the man—of which temperament is only a part.

W.C. Art has been described as "Nature seen through a temperament," you know.

L.F.D. Yes; and it's taking, until you ask what it means. Art is not merely seeing, but doing. The truth in the saying amounts to this—that an artist sees nature through his temperament.

W.C. That *is* the meaning, of course (of the *mot* quoted), and I don't see it destroys its point, as I never supposed it meant anything else. Temperament is at any rate a quite inseparable part of his personality, and, as regards an artist's work, the most important part, in my opinion.

L.F.D. You seem to me to talk of temperament as if it were fate. I am not a fatalist. Free-will may not amount to much; any way, we must act as if there were no doubt of it.

W.C. But you yourself, a while ago, seemed to say there was no help—only pity—for people who were "born so"—that is to say, with a temperament called artistic.

L.F.D. Not much help from the outside, I'm afraid. One must help oneself.

W.C. Your remark about free-will sounds sensible and energetic, but it means "go on to the length of your tether," I presume. Energy more than free-will is concerned, I fancy; and that depends on temperament again.

L.F.D. The more a man gives way to his temperament (doing only what he likes) the less he is able to help himself. That's why I am against the excuse of temperament.

W.C. It is not an excuse, it is a *reason.*

L.F.D. Reason or unreason?

W.C. As we don't agree about temperament, let's say *bent.* I assert that a man, especially an artist, does best in following his bent.

L.F.D. I quite agree, and allow, even, he must follow it. But he may do that without expecting the world always to accommodate itself to him and his whim—which it seems to me he does when he claims to do *only* the work he likes.

W.C. We don't seem to get much "forrarder." You grant my contention, but return to your old position, which seems to me founded on a misapprehension—or some very exceptional experience. Unless he is supported by other people's labour (or what is called "independent") your bogey artist (short of a man of exceptional force and

originality) will be ignored or snuffed out, if he takes that line. Why worry about him?

L.F.D. If the "impossible" artist were simply "snuffed out," no harm would be done. But he leads the young astray. That's why I'm what you call "bitter" about it. It is no exceptional experience to come upon artists who claim more consideration from the world than they have any right to ask.

THE PROFESSION OF ART.

L.F.D. Art ought not to be a profession at all. A man should just follow his craft (or trade: I prefer the old word), and do his work without too much consciousness of being an artist—just being one.

W.C. I entirely agree with you—except that I prefer the older word, "craft." The other reminds one too much of the triumph of the Trade Guilds, after which things began to go wrong. But it is a counsel of perfection. In these days I would not give up an inch of ground for art or artists, while both are so liable to be ignored altogether.

L.F.D. Art is not cared for, of course, except by exception; but the artist can hardly be said to be ignored. He takes care that he sha'n't.

W.C. Contrast the attention given to the man of science or finance, and to the artist, for instance.

L.F.D. If the artist were not made so much of—if he had no claim to the professional status of "artist," but were just a decorator, carver, or the like, doing work with more of *himself* in it than the rest—it would be better for him and his art.

W.C. As I have been contending in the Arts and Crafts movement for years to place the arts of design on an equality with what are called the Fine Arts, you can't expect me to agree with you. If artists in design or handicraft prefer to be slaves of commerce, I suppose they must.

L.F.D. Who wants to be a slave? Not I! I only want the artist to take himself more modestly, to think less of his rank as an artist and more of the work he is doing. Shakespeare was not above tinkering an old play; it was a masterpiece, none the less—or all the more.

W.C. I am for *raising* the status of artists in the arts and crafts of design, not lowering it.

L.F.D. I am against status altogether—and against a man's claiming on his own behalf any distinction. Let his work speak for him.

W.C. You seem to contradict yourself. If your designer makes a position he must have *some* "status."

L.F.D. I used the word in the sense of rank or title. In your sense it is not possible for us either to raise or lower his status. It rests with himself.

W.C. The work of an artist must, of course, always speak for him; and by it he gains his "status" as an artist. It isn't a question of what a man claims, it is what is his due.

L.F.D. Then let him gain his status by his work, not talk about his due.

W.C. A man may concern himself about what is due to others without thinking of what is due to himself. The sympathy and appreciation an artist may meet with make a considerable difference as to his recognition, and therefore to his status as an artist.

L.F.D. I quite agree with you.

W.C. Like yourself, I only care for *real* distinctions. But it often happens in the world that popular forms of art (direct in their appeal) meet with appreciation and reward somewhat out of proportion to the artistic qualities, knowledge and cultivation employed, while other artistic work, involving far more, is overlooked. Those who know may do something, or say something, perhaps, to adjust the balance.

L.F.D. Again I am with you. But I doubt if anything is gained by raising (?) art to a profession. I would rather see a large class of good workmen of whom here and there one distinguished himself by his artistic gifts, than a large class of professed artists much of whose work is necessarily no better than simple handicraft.

W.C. So would I—only a few other things professional would have to be altered first. Our ideal might be possible in a socialistic state, but, in the present state of commercial competition, to belong to a profession is a certain protection to an otherwise often defenceless being. Men have to unite so

against an enemy who would scatter them. Trade Unions or Guilds become necessary to preserve common interests—not to speak of a living wage!

L.F.D. Then your raising the status of the artist is after all only a measure of commercial policy?

W.C. It would be more correct to say economic policy. If a man cannot maintain his "physical efficiency" or his standard of life, he cannot do his work properly.

L.F.D. I don't say it does not pay to boast yourself an artist—in the economic sense. But does the professional position make for art? It leads to raising the artist's pitch, and straining the creative faculty (kept always on the stretch); and the result is loss of spontaneity.

W.C. No. The evils which you attribute to the professional position are really due to the system of commercial competition under which we live, which affects all classes injuriously. To have a position of more or less comfort and independence (so called) is all to the good, both for the welfare and freedom of the artist and his art.

L.F.D. Comfort and independence are to the good. I am not so sure about *position*. It is not commercial competition only that is bad for art, but social competition, into which the artist now enters.

W.C. No doubt; but that is another story.

"Plain living and high thinking" are out of fashion; but even the struggle for social position may in some cases be almost forced on an artist as an accompaniment to, or even as a means of obtaining, the work he does.

L.F.D. I don't think that is so. But if it is, why, then there is no doubt the artist was more happily placed when he was ranked with other workmen.

W.C. I quite agree with you. Curiously enough, he *was* so ranked even as lately as 1811. In a little "Book of Trades" I happen to possess, "the painter" appears with the weaver, the potter and others; but with the guarded statement that "the earnings of an artist cannot be defined; he is paid according to his talents and to the celebrity which is acquired."

L.F.D. Then I am right in saying we make too much of the professional artist. He carries on a trade like any other workman, though it is one in which there happens to be scope for something more than workmanship.

W.C. I was thinking of the fashionable artist. I don't know about making too much of the professional artist. We generally don't recognise our best artists until they are dead. After all, what is the artist's profession socially, compared with that of the lawyer, doctor, or clergyman?

L.F.D. Social position seems to go with

their work. They can't very well do without it. The artist can. And it entails a way of living which doesn't make for art.

W.C. That depends upon circumstances. As you are fond of maintaining, an artist should be a man, and if he attains a certain social weight, and uses that weight to further good causes, that again is all to the good. But perhaps you think an artist must be a specialised animal, kept to his own groove, and quite apart from the social life and movements around him?

L.F.D. On the contrary. I think the man is of more account than the artist, and that the great mistake we make is in putting the artist first.

W.C. But do not you see, my friend, that that is the effect of a specialising, commercial age?

L.F.D. What is?

W.C. Why, of course, the tendency to put what a man *does* before what he *is*—or, as you have it, "the artist first," the man being personally of no account.

L.F.D. Greed (is not that what you mean by commercialism?) is at the bottom of most of our troubles.

W.C. Oh, no! Greed and commercialism are by no means synonymous. You would not say a man was actuated by greed while he was simply struggling to maintain his

position—the standard of life which enabled him, under our present system, to obtain and to do his proper work. I do not grudge the artist any temporary advantage he may happen to possess—in a world of material monopolists.

L.F.D. The struggle for life is not peculiar to "our present system." It has existed ever since Eden, and does not amount to commercialism, which, as I understand it, is the *tyranny* of the commercial spirit. Never mind the monopolists. I say it is bad for the artist to live in the glare of artistic notoriety.

W.C. I do not know how in these days you differentiate "the glare of artistic notoriety" from the reputation an artist may have honestly won by his work?

L.F.D. There is a very obvious distinction between the artist whose work brings him into notice whether he will or no, and the artist who places himself in view.

W.C. I thought "the glare of artistic notoriety" was an artificial light thrown on the artist whether he would or no, not limelight provided by himself. But even the "poseur" may be only advertising for work.

L.F.D. Just so. And it is partly at least because the professional pose is assumed by way of advertisement that, like all advertisement, it is hurtful to art.

W.C. It may be so in some cases; but I think, as a rule, pose is made use of to cover

want of artistic faculty, just as politicians bluff when they are conscious of weakness in argument. Neither would succeed with a more informed and penetrating public.

L.F.D. Of course with a strong hand there is no need to "bluff." But you spoke of advertisement as if it were an excuse for the professional pose.

W.C. "An excuse!" It is a *necessity* forced on all more or less by the very commercialism of our system which you deny or ignore.

L.F.D. No more a necessity than it is an excuse. "They all do it!" the more reason why we should not.

W.C. It does not occur to you, then, that when a practice becomes universal there must be some cause for it—necessity, in short?

L.F.D. No effect without a cause, of course; but I don't see that a custom, even if universal, is therefore right or unavoidable. And the professional pose by way of advertisement is a practice "more honoured in the breach than in the observance."

W.C. Please do not run away with the idea that I think the practice commendable in any way. "Every animal fights with its natural weapons," you know—that is to say, with the only ones available which it can use. The same with humans. Trying to throw light on manners and customs is not the same thing as defending them.

L.F.D. We judge men by the weapons they fight with, and class them as savage or civilised accordingly. Advertisement is not the natural weapon of the artist.

W.C. That depends upon circumstances. We must recognise that artists differ in nature and temperament. Pose and advertisement seem to come naturally to some. Others are content to let their work speak for them.

L.F.D. You don't think much, do you, of the artists to whom pose and advertisement come naturally?

W.C. No, I do not. But the necessity for an artist's work to be *known* is commonly felt; and it becomes more and more difficult for new men to attract attention to their work by ordinary means.

L.F.D. Difficult? It becomes more and more *easy* to make good work known.

W.C. I wish I could share your optimism as to the quick recognition of good work in these days—that is to say, the *best* work. The difference of quality between the art to live *with* and the art to live *by*, is generally too much in evidence, more especially the latter.

L.F.D. I grant you the distinction. I don't say the best work is most certain of recognition, but that the recognition of good work is perhaps surer, and certainly swifter, than ever it was. A clever man may be known almost before he is out of his teens. There are

people whose business it is to discover a genius for you every month.

W.C. All genuine, too, no doubt?

L.F.D. Not quite! but genuine ability gets found out, too. It is not so easy to hide your light under a bushel as it was.

POETIC ORNAMENT.

L.F.D. How comes it, I wonder, that I, who am at least as much interested in ornament as you, am satisfied with design which you would dismiss as merely commonplace? I think you are too much afraid of the commonplace in ornament: what I fear is its self-assertion.

W.C. It is probably on the question what is, or what is not, commonplace in ornament that we differ.

> Tell me what is commonplace,
> The obvious, devoid of grace?

Well, we know it when we see it. What is trade but an organised system for its production? Some artist starts a fresh idea in ornament, straightway it is made mincemeat of for universal supply, and applied to all sorts of unsuitable purposes. We shall soon have ornament (for outward application only) in digestible quantities, provided in tins "ready for use" at a small charge!

L.F.D. Aren't you confounding the common with the commonplace? Yes, we know it when we see it; but I can't accept your suggestions

towards its definition. The obvious is often absolutely the right thing. And, as for grace, what more devoid of it than the art determined to be anything but commonplace. You talk of trade. If it is artistically in a bad way, that is perhaps because artists abuse it instead of trying to help it.

W.C. The difference between the common and the commonplace is quite distinct in my own mind; and I was endeavouring, as I thought, to define the difference—but, "language was given us to conceal our thoughts" (especially on art). We seem to understand the word "obvious" in different senses; at any rate we are certainly using it in different senses. What to an accomplished and tasteful designer is obviously in its right place in ornament is by no means so to the inexpert and tasteless. The question of the trade influence is wrapped up with the whole system of modern production; too big for a digression. Certain basic lines may be *common* to all ornament, but it does not follow that ornament on such lines need be *commonplace*.

L.F.D. We don't appear to get much further in our definition of "commonplace." Can we agree upon its *opposite*, the quality which you must have in ornament and which I look upon more or less as overweight? Would "fine" do for you?

W.C. What? You consider an *essential*

quality in ornament as "overweight"! Fineness of some kind it is, no doubt, which makes the difference we are discussing, but what you call "overweight" I should probably consider as a saving clause. It seems to me we shall have to have two labels—one for *useful ornament* and the other for *ornamental ornament.* Regarding ornament, as I do, as a sort of language or song, I think what it says or sings should be to the purpose, and not tedious; otherwise, give me plain surface.

L.F.D. Definition seems to be hopeless. We still misunderstand one another. Perhaps our difference is that I regard ornament as language only, not necessarily as song, and do not find it tedious when it speaks prosaic common sense.

W.C. I think the most beautiful ornament does "sing." It fills something of the place of music, is perhaps an equivalent in some sense. Sense of harmony, fitness, proportion, taste in colour—can you produce ornament without these, or some of them? These form, perhaps, the "common sense" of ornament, or are at least important ingredients. Prose may have its place in ornament, as in literature, but in neither need it be commonplace. Words are common, just as the forms or types in ornament; but there seems no limit to the variety of their possible re-combination.

L.F.D. I will not say the most beautiful ornament may not be likened to song; and I

am not contending for the commonplace. I am only trying to get at what it is which reconciles me to ornament you will not tolerate. I suppose I do think ornament—sing as it may at its happiest—on the whole more prosaic than "fine" art; of which the only justification is that it *is* fine. Ornament is more modest. It may have a quite practical purpose; and very often it makes no claim to intrinsic interest apart from its use just then and there.

W.C. To decide what reconciles you to what I cannot tolerate can surely only be settled by some concrete instance. Put me to the test. I am rather surprised at your use of the term "fine art." I think beautifully designed decoration is as fine as any so-called fine art, and I consider the distinction misleading nowadays.

L.F.D. My personal preference, as you know, is all in favour of ornamental art. I quite support your contention that it may be as fine as anything. But I think it convenient to have some term by which to distinguish art claiming independence of any useful or practical purpose, and I don't grudge it the title it has assumed.

W.C. I do not see that ornament (or decorative art) is necessarily more prosaic than "fine art" (or pictorial art); all depends on the designer and his resources and powers of suggestion. Not that I wish

to underrate fine art — I would rather say *fit* art. The qualities that go to make painting are out of place in a wall-paper. Yet both may be *fine* in their own way.

L.F.D. Great part of ornament has to fulfil some *not poetic* purpose, and it is that humble, and perhaps prosaic, but most fit, ornament which you seem to me, in your higher appreciation of the poetic, to under-value.

W.C. It seems to me every art has its natural limitations, whether it is called "fine" or anything else, just as all kinds have their purpose and relationship to some human need. A picture, after all, must be decorative, just as a gem is, and both want their setting.

As to the non-poetic purpose of ornament, I am afraid I do not agree. Ornament can have no purpose unless it be to give some touch of joy or beauty to a thing—which seems to me to put it much in the same relationship to practical purpose as poetry bears to life. But it must be absolutely fitting to its purpose all the same. I would say with Carlyle "Let the Devil fly away with the fine arts," with this qualification—if they are not *fit* arts.

L.F.D. I insist upon the non-poetic purpose of much (not all) ornament. Take an instance or two. Who wants poetry in a carpet or "joy" in a wall-paper? The purpose of either

is fulfilled if it forms a pleasantly broken background of restful colour.

W.C. Your "pleasantly broken background of restful colour" no doubt is a sufficient purpose for wall-paper or carpet, and I do not expect quotations from Shelley or Chaucer on either—albeit I was once guilty of inscribing the refrain from "The Flower and the Leaf" all over a wall-paper (don't shudder).

The Arab comforted himself with texts from the Koran on his carpets and wall tiles, and they made beautiful ornament. Surely the pattern of a wallpaper or carpet is all the better for some charm about it, in addition to meeting the technical requirements and a severely utilitarian purpose? You seem to grant this, indeed. The reason we see so many "stodgy" patterns is probably that they are turned out to order without any "joy," in a very unpoetical factory, simply to meet "shop requirements."

L.F.D. Neither of us wants stodgy, shoppy, spiritless ornament. But I find "joy" enough in trying to solve a problem in design, and satisfaction in the solution of it. A touch of poetry is all to the good, so long as it is not at the expense of ornament; but it is no part of the bargain, and does not make amends for any shortcoming in technical or practical requirements. You seem to want all ornament to be attractive. I am satisfied with the modest ornament which is content to be (what much of it should be) background.

W.C. I could sign your articles, I think; only I am not sure that we yet have the same idea of the meaning of what I called poetry, or charm, in ornament. I do not see how it could be at the expense of the ornament, for it ought to be an essential part of it, just as poetic idea should be inseparable from the mechanism of verse. By "attractive" I don't mean assertive, but I don't see how ornament can be really good unless it gives pleasure, unless it possesses some beauty—*is* attractive, in short. Background is most important, and is often indeed the most attractive part of a picture or interior.

L.F.D. We seem to be on the way to unanimity. Whether ornament gives pleasure, or is in your sense attractive, depends upon the onlooker. Something appears to give me pleasure which is not enough for you; for example, a pattern which ingeniously and perfectly fulfils its purpose of breaking up the wall or the floor space of my room without any charm of novelty, or poetry, or symbolism.

W.C. It may be so; but I cannot understand how such a pattern, while perfectly fulfilling its useful function and meeting its technical conditions, if it is the product of a sensitive and intelligent human being and not a machine, should not have also something besides in it—something *human*, in short, which speaks of character or individual (or racial) feeling behind it, in however still

and small a voice. Modern conditions of trade and factory production do not favour this quality, and I suppose but few would ask for it, or expect to find it, or even recognise it if there!

L.F.D. I am disposed to endorse all you say; but I still feel that you want something more than I do. Probably I should feel that "human" character you spoke of in the intelligent solution of a decorative problem. With regard to the personal element in art, its interest is not to be denied; and a strong personality writes, so to speak, always under its own signature; but I am not sure that I want anyone's personality to call out to me from the walls and the floor of my room.

W.C. You are satisfied with the scientific or technical solution of a pattern problem, the evidence of intelligence alone. I look for a spark of imagination or touch of human sympathy as well. This seems to be the little difference between us—a distinction perhaps rather than a difference? It seems to me that the personal element gives the dramatic interest to all forms of artistic expression, but it need not necessarily be clamorous—indeed, if it is, it is in danger of becoming inartistic.

L.F.D. I too am thankful for a spark of imagination, and appreciate individuality when it does not assert itself unduly. How nice it would be if we could have everything! But

it does not work out so. I ask for surface pattern, and they give me something which, even if it were a poem, would not be what I wanted.

W.C. I do not know who "they" may be who thus dispense their gifts regardless of your requirements; but we none of us appreciate the exchange when offered (metaphorically) serpents and stones, say, for bread and fish. You will have to "insist on seeing the label." It would be a terrible thing to be offered Kipling instead of a useful Kidderminster, I should agree; but who nowadays would hide his poetical light in the meshes of a textile or the pattern of a wall-paper?

L.F.D. Who indeed would nowadays hide poetic light under any practical purpose? It glares, a naked incandescent lamp. I think I want it doused.

W.C. Rather a Will-o'-the-wisp, from your point of view, this poetic light, isn't it? There is more surface pattern than poetry about, and there is always plain surface to fall back upon if neither suit.

L.F.D. As to the preponderance of surface pattern, I am not so sure. There is no great plenty of adequate surface decoration; but of the kind of pattern which supports itself on a crutch of sentiment, there is more than enough.

W.C. I confess I see more "shop" than "sentiment" in our surface pattern, as a rule.

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rather a kind of convention in this than a new interpretation of nature, for the most part; and I think one might trace the elements of even the most modern precedent-disclaiming work to certain germs or forms in historic or prehistoric ornament—differently compounded of course. In the practice of design I think *we learn everything from nature, and then we have everything to learn.* Of course we learn from art as well as nature, but an artist is neither an archæologist nor a naturalist, and there must always be some unenclosed country for the fancy or imagination, beyond grammars and dictionaries—at least, I hope so.

L.F.D. It is not the "new" art but the naïvely natural I had in my mind; and I said nothing about enclosing all the fields of imagination. I like your paradox; but if, having learnt everything from nature, we have still everything to learn, where else do we learn it but from art? That is just my point.

W.C. I have already granted your point that we learn from art as well as nature. It is a matter of course and goes without saying; but there are also such things as experience and the complex processes of the individual mind, through which all facts, impressions and influences, whether from nature or art, must pass, as so much raw material (or cooked material) before any new form of art is reproduced. The forms of art, like the forms of nature, are the result of evolution.

L.F.D. I agree to all that, if I understand

you aright, and it is precisely in that naturally, and necessarily, and inevitably, human and personal quality of art (no matter how simply it sets out to solve its perhaps practical problem) that I find the human element on which you lay stress; and do not, therefore, ask for poetry in pattern.

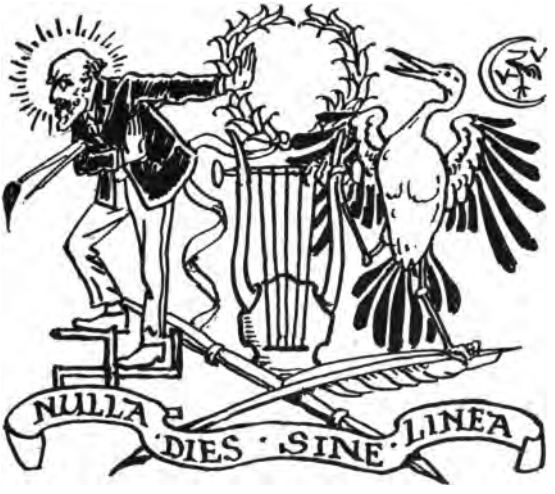
W.C. Humanity is quite enough for me—though I don't admit there is anything necessarily inhuman or undecorative about a suggestion of poetry — which, after all, is only another name for feeling.

L.F.D. Nor did I say there was. And I have never quarrelled with poetry. What I do say, is—first, that there is a deal of modern work in which we are expected to excuse shortcomings of design and workmanship on the plea of poetry, real or pretended; and—second, that poetry is no part of the business of ornament.

W.C. Well, I really was not aware that poetry was so plentiful, or was thought so much of, that it could cover bad design and workmanship. I suppose it all depends upon the point of view and what we mean by poetry. Certainly it is "no part of the business" of an ornamentist—only his pleasure. That is my point—that you must have some sort of evidence of *pleasure* in the design or work on the part of its producer, or it will not give pleasure to the beholder.

L.F.D. Poetry real or pretended, I said. I grant you it is mostly pretence. And you

grant me all I claim when you allow that poetry is no part of the business of ornament. As to pleasure, art is not play ; but the very pleasure of a workman in his work has a fair chance of pleasing.



THE LIVING INTEREST IN ORNAMENT.

L.F.D. Human and animal forms are, as often as not, a disturbing influence in repeated pattern. Why use them there?

W.C. For three reasons. Because their forms give me certain lines and masses decoratively valuable, and not obtainable by other means. They give life and movement in ornament. By the use of such forms, also, symbolic meaning may be expressed (or concealed), fanciful allegory or playful ideas. In short, they make ornament more interesting and amusing.

L.F.D. When the end is repeated pattern, it is not best reached by such means. The recurring animal life may, very likely, have too much movement for repose.

W.C. You may easily have too much of a good thing; but in designing a repeating pattern one consciously designs for the repeated effect, and arranges one's units accordingly.

L.F.D. Don't you find ornament amusing enough in itself?

W.C. Ornament may be amusing enough,

or may bore one. But why say "ornament in itself," as if the introduction of animals and figures made it not ornament?

L.F.D. I don't allow that movement is such a good thing when it is repeated over and over again. I like a pattern to be steady. The figures and animals which really make ornament have usually been reduced to something so remote from life and movement as to seem no longer animate.

W.C. Please don't suppose I wish to encourage tipsy patterns. A pattern, whatever movement it contains or expresses, must, of course, have equilibrium. I am not thinking of bad patterns. I am simply defending the principle *of choice of units.* All must depend ultimately on their artistic use. Beautiful designs can be made of a very few simple and quite abstract units. Decoration is like music somewhat. It is a question of what instrument you will play. You may play on one string or many. It depends on your aim. As to animals made inanimate in ornament I can't agree. What about the lions and tigers in a Persian carpet?

L.F.D. I can't endure them!

W.C. If you can't endure them, I am afraid there's little more to be said; but I should like to ask if you can't endure the birds and animals in Egyptian hieroglyphics, or the brush-worked animal borders on early Greek pots, or Chinese dragons, or Sicilian

silks, or Heraldry—largely *the* ornament of the Middle Ages—or Italian Renaissance Arabesques?

L.F.D. Oh, there's plenty to be said. As to "choice of units," that depends. The conditions of repeated pattern limit it, and exclude, as I think, lions and tigers crawling about the floor, where you are as likely as not to see them upside down—a view of the creatures undesirable in proportion as the nature in them is not subdued. Nature is not very lively in the archaic Greek and Mediæval and Renaissance ornament you instance. As to Heraldry and Egyptian hieroglyphics, they are not repeated pattern, but symbolism; ornament is in their case a secondary consideration.

W.C. I think you would find it difficult to separate ornament and symbolism. In their earlier forms they are identical. In Mediæval Heraldry the ornamental sense is quite as important as the symbolic purpose. The one appears to be strengthened by the other. We find heraldic details, mainly animals, used as ornamental units, and repeated all over a background to figures (for example, in Mediæval paintings and brasses), with a rich and splendid decorative effect not to be obtained by other means. I quite agree that choice of units in ornament must be governed by conditions of material and use.

L.F.D. Given a meaning to express (as in Heraldry), by all means let it be expressed

with every regard to ornamental considerations. We are agreed there. My objection is only to animals repeated ; they lend themselves, I say, to pattern (and that is our point) about in proportion as the nature in them is sacrificed. It seems to me that the conditions of pattern design mostly rule out of court animal and human forms.

W.C. That is as much as to say that whatsoever is introduced into repeating pattern requires treatment; but you might say that of all art. Do not all forms require treatment, floral as well as animal? Animals and figures are more difficult to treat, of course. Much depends upon what you mean by nature. Some people think shaded flowers on a wall-paper or cretonne "more natural."

L.F.D. I am not of those people. Animals seem so difficult to treat that it is the rarest thing to find them taking quite their place in pattern. I have not definitely determined why—perhaps because they are too individual to bear constant repetition? Eliminate the individuality, make a mere type or symbol of a creature, and, I grant you, it becomes more amenable.

W.C. It comes to what the designer himself is fond of, or what his critics like, or dislike, as the case may be. Association colours our prejudices. When you speak of "mere type," however, you hit the great point of difference between ornamental form and pictorial form. Typical form to me is just *the* kind

one seeks for in ornament, whether floral or other.

L.F.D. To me the repetition of a living thing lessens my interest in it. It may even end in boring me more than sheer geometry would do. If it is to be repeated, it should be with a difference; and that, you know, is mostly impossible.

W.C. Repetition is analogous to recurring phrase in music or poetry. It all depends how it's done. One can't be absolute in art.

L.F.D. The recurring phrase in music is repeated at intervals only. In pattern identical forms stand "all in a row." That surely makes a vast difference!

W.C. I think my parallel holds good. Forms in patterns *can* only be repeated at intervals, and, just as a phrase in music, those repeated forms may be identical. "All of a row" may or may not be a condition of a pattern, but it does not touch the argument. You might as reasonably object to repetition in music because it was produced on the same keyboard?

L.F.D. I do not see the analogy between a musical phrase, recurring as it were unexpectedly, at unequal intervals determined by the musician, and a feature in pattern design which recurs again and again at equal and mechanically fixed distances.

W.C. Predetermined by the designer, you should add.

L.F.D. No, they are not predetermined by the designer—the intervals are none of his choosing—the recurrence of his units is fixed by the width of his material and so forth.

W.C. The mechanical intervals or recurrences due to width and so on, are accepted as essential conditions by the designer, and he ought to design in full consciousness of them. Surely the analogy is sufficient as an illustration: analogous does not mean identical.

L.F.D. Analogy does not further an argument unless it runs quite evenly.

W.C. I really do not see that the introduction of animal forms in pattern design is a question of reason.

L.F.D. If it is not a question of reason, how comes it we have been reasoning about it all this while?

W.C. It is a question of feeling, preference, and treatment, like all artistic questions. You cannot prescribe a poet's subjects. It is a poet's treatment that is the important thing.

L.F.D. I grant the paramountcy of treatment, and agree that you cannot impose upon the poet the subject of his poem; but you may safely point out to him that a subject is dangerously like being impossible to treat —which is almost more than I said about animals in pattern, for I allowed that they were all right if treated with rigorous convention.

W.C. You said you had not quite determined why animals did not take their place. You now say "They are all right if treated with rigorous convention." You also "could not endure" Persian-carpet lions and tigers. Our reasoning seems a little mixed. We start with personal likes and dislikes, and find reasons to justify them. Is that "pure reason"?

L.F.D. The animals in Persian carpets are not recurring units of the pattern. The animals I can endure in repetition are treated with *such* rigorous convention as hardly to count for living things. There is too much of the menagerie about your Persian lions and tigers for me. If you would admit (which I am afraid you won't) the rigour of convention which would satisfy me, I dare say I could make friends with your pets, and so we could embrace.

W.C. The Persian animals and birds I had in mind *are* recurring units in one of the finest carpets in South Kensington Museum, and no "menagerie" about them. Art is, after all, not argument, but depends upon demonstration. I have no doubt I could satisfy you, and that we should both agree, when it came to particular instances. You admit animal forms in pattern if rigorously conventionalised. I say *all* forms must be conventionalised in pattern. I should prefer the word formalised or systematised; but, define as you will, no words are definite

enough in discussing art, which must ultimately in all its forms justify itself.

L.F.D. "All forms must be conventionalised." Agreed. But we differ still, do we not? as to the degree of conventionalisation. It is because I find animal forms not very amenable to the necessary "treatment" that I don't want them, or don't often want them, in pattern. There comes a point in argument about art when words will no longer do: perhaps we have about reached it.

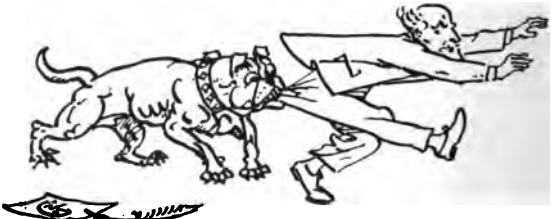
W.C. Yes, the final appeal is to demonstration. You don't want animals in pattern. "What never?—well, hardly ever." You are getting quite Gilbertian! The degree of conventionalisation or formalism must be governed by the purpose and material of the design, and by its relation to its surroundings. Choice of units and their treatment becomes a question of fitness. We appear to agree on general principles; but I claim freedom of choice of units on the part of the designer, and think an artist's justification is in his treatment. You are afraid of the Noah's Ark, and would only allow it to be played with on the strictest conditions.

L.F.D. Noah's Ark it often is! But whether from Noah's Ark or the Zoo, I don't want animals on my carpet. If the artist by his treatment can make me like them, I grant him justified; but I doubt his doing that. He is more likely to make me think, "Why can't the man employ his beasts to better

purpose—in ornament, for example, which is not repeated?"

W.C. Ah! there we touch economics. A strictly limited menagerie on a severely limited diet, and no encores—those appear to be your terms for the admission of animals in repeating ornament. I notice people who are not fond of animals by temperament, always say they "like them in their place."

L.F.D. Yes, "temperament" accounts for a great deal, no doubt; and I confess I like them "in their place"—not when they have me by the tail.



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